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Security Council

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Letter dated 18 September 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you the attached letter from the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (see annex).

I would be most grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**

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Annex to the letter dated 18 September 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, it is with grave concern that I draw your attention to the growing toll of the Syrian conflict and its impact on the global refugee crisis. As Member States work to stem the exodus from Syria, it is vital that the Security Council take the comprehensive action needed to solve the ongoing crisis in Syria and work with urgency to provide civilians the protection they desperately need, both inside and outside of Syria.

Since the start of the Syrian crisis, the United Nations and its implementing agencies, operating under the mandate of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), have provided lifesaving assistance to millions of Syrians in need. Tragically, however, such efforts have not succeeded in resolving the humanitarian catastrophe inside Syria or in stemming the flow of Syrians who are desperately fleeing the violence. To the contrary, Syrians are being killed, starved and barrel-bombed in record numbers.

At the heart of the escalating crisis is the Syrian regime's growing desperation and its increasing reliance on indiscriminate aerial weapons. Since the start of the Syrian uprising in 2011, the Syrian regime has steadily increased its use of aerial shelling and barrel bombs so that, today, aerial bombardment is the leading cause of civilian deaths in Syria, accounting for between 50 and 65 per cent of all civilian deaths in 2015, according to data compiled by the Violations Documentation Centre in Syria.

The emergence of indiscriminate aerial bombardment as the Syrian regime's favourite weapon of choice has made daily life in Syria a nightmare. In addition to killing more than 18,000 civilians, aerial bombardment has made residential areas unliveable. Homes, marketplaces, schools, medical facilities and places of worship have been barrel-bombed to the ground. In Rif Daimashq, eastern Ghouta, Idlib, Aleppo and Dayr al-Zawr, entire towns, villages and cities have been decimated, while those who stay within them live with the knowledge that they can be bombed at any time and in any place without warning and without repercussions.

As the Secretary-General stated on 16 September 2015, "People facing barrel bombs and brutality in their country will continue to seek life in another." For millions of Syrians, exodus is not a choice; it is the only way to survive. As a result, more than 4.2 million Syrians have now fled their country. The vast majority have found refuge in the region, but Syria's neighbours can no longer cope. With Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey under growing strain, many Syrians now view Europe as their only hope.

Too much of Europe has, however, failed to show Syrian refugees the basic decency they deserve and that international law on refugees, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, requires. While Germany has shown great leadership in defining responsible action towards refugees, too few countries have followed. In addition to erecting a fence along its border with Serbia, Hungary has seen its riot police officers attack innocent refugees with batons, water cannons and tear gas. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, police have used stun grenades to prevent refugees from attempting to cross the border into the country from Greece. In the Czech Republic, refugees have been labelled like cattle. Throughout Southern Europe,

criminals and smugglers operate with impunity, attacking and exploiting those who are most vulnerable.

While much of Europe has a long tradition of providing safe refuge to people in need, too many States are failing to provide unimpeded access for people in need of protection. The result is horrifying. Earlier this month, the bodies of two Syrian brothers only 3 and 5 years old arrived dead on Turkish shores. They are just two of the thousands of Syrians who have paid with their lives to flee the brutality inflicted by a Government they did not choose and a war they did not start. The news of their deaths came just days after the bodies of 71 refugees were found in a truck abandoned on an Austrian motorway.

The growing frequency with which Syrian refugees are dying on European soil and shores demands a comprehensive response by the Security Council. The crisis in Syria is no longer a Syrian problem. It is a global problem in search of a global solution, first and foremost from members of the Council. To stem the exodus of Syrians from their country, it is critical that the Council work with urgency to:

- Develop a plan to receive, process and compassionately resettle refugees fairly;
- Develop regional plans to create legal routes to Europe and elsewhere so that criminal traffickers are undercut and deaths are prevented along the journey;
- Raise funds to ensure that there is greater structural support for neighbouring countries so that they can better cope with refugees; and, above all;
- Tackle the root cause of the refugee crisis by providing in-country protection for Syrian civilians through the enforcement of a no-fly zone in order to create the conditions for their safe return.

The enforcement of a no-fly zone will stop the leading cause of civilian deaths across Syria and eliminate the main driver of refugees from their country to Europe and elsewhere. It will deny extremists a major recruiting tool, by demonstrating that the international community is prepared to protect all Syrian civilians from harm and is taking concrete steps to save their lives. It will also make a political settlement in Syria more likely by altering the Syrian Government's assessment of the battlefield once its forces are denied their most lethal weapon.

A political settlement to the conflict remains the chief ambition of the Syrian National Coalition. We continue to work with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria to implement the Geneva communiqué. We are deeply alarmed, however, by the recent actions of the Russian Government, which has increased its military support for the Assad dictatorship, reportedly providing naval infantry forces, battle tanks, artillery and other equipment that will undoubtedly be used to aid and abet Assad's killing machine. This unwarranted intervention by a veto-wielding member of the Security Council makes a peaceful resolution to the conflict less likely and is wholly at odds with the will of the Syrian people. Now more than ever we need international action that protects civilians, not reckless meddling that increases the killing. As the refugee crisis and threat of extremism continue to escalate and threaten global security, the onus is on the Council to take practical, enforceable steps to bring an end to this conflict. If the Council is unable to address the most serious security threat facing the world today, then it is incumbent upon Member States to act to uphold international law and protect our people.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative to the United Nations

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General Assembly
Seventieth session
Agenda item 108
Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Seventieth year

Identical letters dated 21 September 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I wish to transmit the following information:

The United Nations is currently marking the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1624 (2005), which prohibits incitement to violence and terrorism. We are also approaching the fourteenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) on counter-terrorism, which followed the terrorist attacks in New York on 11 September 2001. On this occasion, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the United Nations, its competent entities and its Member States to make a genuine and sincere commitment to fighting terrorism; to fully and decisively enforce the texts that we have adopted over the years; to hold States sponsors of terrorism to account; and to prevail on them to refrain from violating international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Terrorists have been targeting the State and people of Syria for over four years, and they have now reached an unprecedented degree of criminality and savagery. We have described to the Security Council the acts of terrorism that have taken place in Syria. Most recently, terrorist groups launched missiles at the cities of Damascus and Aleppo and other Syrian towns and villages and their facilities and infrastructure. On 14 September, two blasts struck the city of Hasakah. These and other terrorist acts require a strong international commitment to tackling the roots of terrorism and its sources of funding. Despite their importance, resolutions 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015) have unfortunately been neglected in numerous cases, whether because certain Member States believe that they are safe from terrorism and violent extremism, or because certain other States face a gap in means and capacities, or because Governments lack political will or are directly or indirectly involved in supporting or glorifying terrorism or in inciting violence, terrorist acts and barbaric crimes.

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The counter-terrorism resolutions of the Security Council require all Member States to take a set of legislative and practical measures that are necessary in order to fight the scourge of terrorism, which poses a threat to international peace and security. Yet the Governments of certain States Members of this Organization, particularly Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, continue to provide every form of support for terrorism and terrorists, including funds and weapons, extremist *takfirist* ideology and foreign mercenary recruits. The Governments of certain other States, some of which are members of the Security Council, have continued to politicize counter-terrorism issues. They take a frankly ideological approach to the topic, turning a blind eye to the glaring violations committed by State sponsors of terrorism, which ought to be held rigorously accountable. Citing pretexts that have become all too familiar to everyone, certain Member States have let their territory become a safe haven for extremist groups, which have free rein to incite violence and terrorism, spread their hateful rhetoric and sow discord among religions. What are the Security Council and the United Nations doing about all of this?

The United Nations should also prevent the Erdoğan regime in Turkey from exploiting the suffering of Syrian citizens who have been displaced by Turkish-backed terrorists and by the unilateral coercive measures imposed on Syria by certain Member States. The Turkish regime has forced those people to flee in order to create a large-scale humanitarian crisis. Turkey believes that such a crisis will bring Europe and the United States to establish a terrorist hotbed in northern Syria. As part of the same endeavour, Turkey has asked to have an item regarding the Syrian refugees included on the agenda of the General Assembly. That step paves the way for Turkey to exploit the so-called international humanitarian summit, which will take place in 2016 in Istanbul, in order to promote Turkey's craven agenda and trade on the suffering of the Syrians.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that all parties must coordinate with it in advance and cooperate fully in order to eliminate terrorism as represented by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Nusrah Front and other terrorist organizations, entities, groups and individuals associated with the Al-Qaida organization, which are active on Syrian and Iraqi territory and pose a threat to regional and international peace and security. The United States, Britain, France, Canada and Australia have sought to justify their intervention in Syria by citing the fight against ISIL. They have invoked Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, but have not consulted with the Syrian Government. That course of action distorts the provisions of the Charter and manipulates international law. Such an assault on Syrian sovereignty will merely give terrorism a freer hand. The only productive way to combat terrorism remains the establishment of an effective international coalition within the framework of international law and with the participation of concerned States, particularly Syria, which is the main party confronting terrorism in the region.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 108, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative